

Message Text

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ACTION IO-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 AID-05
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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1008
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NESCO

E.O.11652: N/A
TAGS: UNESCO, PORG, AORG
SUBJECT: UNESCO: 104 EXBD: ATMOSPHERICS OF M'BOW'S
DISCUSSION OF THE MASS MEDIA

1. M'BOW'S ORAL REPORT ON APRIL 24 FEATURED, ALONG WITH QUESTION UNESCO PROGRAM EFFICIENCY AND UNCERTAINTY US PAYMENTS, AND VITAL IMPORTANCE OF HIS OWN INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL, HIS THOUGHTS ABOUT THE MASS MEDIA. HE WAS EXCESSIVELY AND EMOTIONALLY CRITICAL OF THE WESTERN MEDIA, ATTACKING BY NAME AP AND GEORGE BEEBE. IN PERM DEL'S VIEW, THIS WAS REACTION TO PRESS CRITICISM OF HIM PERSONALLY, AND OF UNESCO, WHICH WAS RECENTLY CARRIED BY AP AND INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE; AS COLLECTED FROM WORLD PRESS FREEDOM COMMITTEE STATEMENTS AND OTHERS AT MARCH 1978 IPI MEETING IN CANBERRA; UNESCO COVERAGE BY GEORGE BEEBE; AND COVERAGE IN CERTAIN OF THE LATIN AMERICAN PRESS. WHEN ASKED FOLLOWING DAY ABOUT THESE DIRECT REFERENCES, M'BOW SAID HE WAS "HELPING" THE US STATE DEPARTMENT AGAINST BEEBE WHO HAD ALSO CRITICIZED
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STATE DEPT.

2. SINCE 1974 GEN CONF, AND PARTICULARLY SINCE UNESCO COMMUNICATIONS MEETING IN COSTA RICA, JULY 1976, M'BOW HAS BEEN CONVINCED OF AN "INTERNATIONAL MEDIA CONSPIRACY" DIRECTED AGAINST HIM PERSONALLY, AND UNESCO. DURING ORAL REPORT, DG SEEMED TO BE TRYING TO CONVINC EXBD OF THIS.

HE DESCRIBED AT LENGTH PRESS RELEASE REPORTING HIM DEAD OF A HEART ATTACK SEVERAL YEARS AGO, TOLD HOW THIS HAD AFFECTED HIS FAMILY IN SENEGAL, AND SAID THAT HE HAS TRIED TO GRASP THE "ULTERIOR MOTIVE" BEHIND THE CONSPIRACY WHICH THIS AND OTHER EVENTS DEMONSTRATE.

3. M'BOW ALSO SAID CERTAIN OF THE MEDIA OPPOSE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PRESS AGENCIES BY THE POOR COUNTRIES. THIS AMOUNTS TO 19TH CENTURY STYLE DISCRIMINATION ("NEO-COLONIALISM") WHICH HOLDS LDC'S INCAPABLE OF PRODUCING RESPONSIBLE AND OBJECTIVE COPY. (FORMER MEXICAN PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA FOLLOWED UP ON THIS IN HIS REPLY, CALLING DEVELOPED COUNTRIES "INTELLECTUALLY UNDERDEVELOPED.")

4. SUBSTANTIVE ELEMENTS OF PRESENTATION WENT NO FARTHER THAN USUAL LDC CRITICISM OF INFORMATION IMBALANCES RESULTING FROM WHAT M'BOW AND OTHERS ARE INCREASINGLY CALLING "INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION MONOPOLIES." M'BOW SAID HE SQUARELY BEHIND TOTAL FREEDOM OF INFORMATION, BUT THAT FREEDOM IS IMPOSSIBLE, GIVEN MONOPOLY CONTROL OF INFORMATION. THEREFORE, WAYS SHOULD BE FOUND TO GUARANTEE THE OBJECTIVITY OF INFORMATION THROUGHOUT THE WORLD (COMMENT: THIS WOULD DOVETAIL WITH UNESCO'S VIEW OF ITSELF AS A "STANDARDS SETTING" ORGANIZATION). M'BOW CONTINUED THAT FREEDOM OF INFORMATION PRESUPPOSES THAT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THOSE PROVIDING INFORMATION BE FULLY PROTECTED; THOSE INFORMING PEOPLE, HOWEVER, MUST BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACCURACY OF THEIR REPORTS. HE ASKED EXBD MEMBERS TO CORRECT HIM IF THIS ANALYSIS OF UNESCO'S POSITION ON MASS MEDIA INCORRECT, AND SAID HE HOPED MCBRIDE COMMISSION WOULD BE USEFUL IN DISPELLING "MALICIOUS" CRITICISMS AGAINST UNESCO.

5. M'BOW'S REQUEST FOR EXBD CONFIRMATION HIS VIEW OF UNESCO'S POSITION ON MASS MEDIA DREW STRONG SUPPORT AROUND TABLE. RESPONSES SEEMED ORCHESTRATED, BUT PERM DEL HAS NO EVIDENCE THAT IT WAS. IN ANY EVENT, MANY BOARD MEMBERS, ESPECIALLY LDC REPS, HAVE SAME REACTION AS M'BOW TO PRESS CRITICISM OF UNESCO, WHETHER TRUE OR FALSE, AND HOLD "FREE PRESS" RESPONSIBLE WITHOUT MUCH ATTENTION TO PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING IT. EVEN MODERATES SUCH AS AMB EL WAKIL (EGYPT) WHO TOLD BOARD MEMBERS THEY SHOULD TAKE THESE PRESS CRITICISMS PERSONALLY, SEEMED TO LEAN IN THIS DIRECTION DURING DEBATE.

6. PERM DEL BELIEVES THIRD WORLD BOARD MEMBERS

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GENERALLY SIDE WITH DG FOR REASONS HE ENUNCIATED. EE'S
WILL ATTEMPT TO MANIPULATE SITUATION TO THEIR OWN
ADVANTAGE. KUTAKOV (USSR) SCORED "IMPERIALIST
MONOPOLIES" WHICH CONTROL WORLD INFORMATION AND PUBLISH
LIES, AND PLACED HIMSELF SHOULDER TO SHOULDER WITH DG'S
EFFORTS TO COUNTER CONSPIRACY AGAINST HIM AND UNESCO.
KUTAKOV ASKED DG FOR PROGRESS REPORT ON MEDIA DRAFT
DECLARATION. LIPATTI (ROMANIA) SAID THAT MASS MEDIA IS
MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION BEFORE UNESCO, AND FULLY SHARED
AND SUPPORTED DG'S VIEWS. BAHNER (GDR) ATTACKED PRESS
MONOPOLIES FOR MALIGNING DG, AND CALLED FOR
"PROGRESSIVE EXPERTS" ALL OVER THE WORLD TO ENGAGE
COMMUNICATION ISSUES.

7. SOME BOARD MEMBERS DID NOT RISE TO BAIT. ABAD-
GRIJALVA (ECUADOR) SPOKE OF THE HISTORIC FREE PRESS IN
LATIN AMERICA, AND CITED DISQUIET AMONG "INTELLECTUALS"
IN REGION WHO FEARED THAT MEASURES SUCH AS A DECLARATION
ON MASS MEDIA PRINCIPLES MAY CHALLENGE FREEDOM OF PRESS
WHICH THEY OBLIGED TO DEFEND. AMB VALERY (FRANCE)
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DENIED EXISTENCE OF A UNESCO "POLICY" ON MASS MEDIA, AND SAID THAT STATE INFORMATION MONOPOLIES WERE AS DANGEROUS AS PRIVATE ONES. HOFF (LIBERIA) ECHOED THIS THEME, AS DID GARBO (NORWAY) WHO NONETHELESS SEVERELY CRITICIZED MEDIA FOR MALICIOUS AND INACCURATE REPORTING. AGIOBU-KEMMER (NIGERIA) DID NOT REFER TO MEDIA.

8. PERM DEL BELIEVED THAT ITS IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO DG'S REPORT WOULD HAVE ONLY PRODUCED DIRECT CONFRONTATION WITH DG. GIVEN VERY UNFAVORABLE ATMOSPHERE IT DECIDED TO RESPOND WHEN ITEM IS DISCUSSED AS A SEPARATE AGENDA ITEM. BOARD MEMBERS FROM FRG AND ITALY DID NOT SPEAK, AND DENIS (BELGIUM) INTERVENED ONLY BRIEFLY AND DID NOT TOUCH ON MASS MEDIA.

9. ON FOLLOWING DAY, M'BOW PROJECTED WHAT WE WOULD REGARD AS A REASONABLE, RATIONAL IMAGE BEFORE THE BOARD. HE REFERRED IN A MATTER OF FACT TONE TO PRESS CONFERENCES HE ALWAYS HOLDS DURING HIS TRAVELS, AND CLAIMED TO UNDERSTAND APPREHENSIONS OF SOME CONCERNING STATE CONTROL OF PRESS. HE DREW CONCLUSION FROM DEBATE THAT BOARD SEEMED TO FAVOR ALTERNATIVE 4 (C) IN 104 EX/28 FOR BROADENING MEDIA DECLARATION TO INCLUDE THIRD WORLD INTERESTS AND CONCEPT OF NEW WORLD INFORMATION ORDER. EACH COUNTRY, HE SAID, SHOULD HAVE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE ITS VIEWS KNOWN TO ALL OTHERS, AND WHEN THIS IS POSSIBLE, FOUNDATIONS FOR A NEW WORLD INFORMATION ORDER WILL HAVE BEEN LAID.

10. M'BOW REITERATED REQUEST FOR INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO PROCEED WITH MEDIA DRAFT DECLARATION. HE INTENDS TO COMPLY WITH 19GC RES ON DECLARATION, BUT NOTED THAT ITEM STILL ELUDES CONSENSUS. NONETHELESS HE HOPED FOR A LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SOLUTION, AND REPORTED THAT TONE OF MCBRIDE COMMISSION MEETING IN STOCKHOLM HAS BEEN MUCH MORE CONSTRUCTIVE THAN OTHER NEWS AGENCY MEETINGS IN PAST. THE CLIMATE, HE SAID, IS ONE OF TRANQUILITY, AND A COMMITMENT TO DIALOGUE.

11. PERM DEL HAS LEARNED THAT DECISION TO PUT MASS MEDIA ON AGENDA WAS DG'S. HE REPORTEDLY BELIEVED IT WAS NECESSARY TO OBTAIN PROCEDURAL INSTRUCTIONS FROM EXBD ON DISPOSAL OF MASS MEDIA DECLARATION SINCE IT OBVIOUS FROM CONSULTATIONS THAT A BROAD CONSENSUS WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE. WHEN PROVISIONAL AGENDA WAS COMPOSED, THE DG HAD THOUGHT THAT ORAL REPORT ON HIS

ACTION TO DATE WOULD BE SUFFICIENT. NOW HE WISHES TO
COVER HIMSELF WITH A DECISION ON PROCEDURE BY THE BOARD.
NO NEW DRAFT TEXTS HAVE SURFACED SINCE THAT ONE DATED
DECEMBER 20, AND DISCUSSION AT 104TH BOARD WILL DEAL
WITH PROCEDURE, NOT THE SUBSTANCE OF (ANY) DRAFT
DECLARATION.
TORRES

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